

Ottawa Police Update to Media

Tuesday, February 8, 2022 – 2 p.m.

Moderator: Constable Amy Gagnon, Ottawa Police

Panelists

- OPS Deputy Chief, Steve Bell
- Emergency Protective Services GM, Kim Ayotte

Opening Remarks – Steve Bell

- Continue to work hard to end this occupation
- Strategy focuses on reducing footprint
- Focus on enforcement in downtown core
- Court order was issued – OPS enforce those orders, but will use discretion
- Received fake threats to distract emergency resources, worked with Ohio Police to arrest that individual
- Protestors are also attempting to distract officers by filling fuel cans with water
- When trying to cease fuel, officers were swarmed by protesters
- Ceased and towed some vehicles, continue to face resource challenges
- Identified need for 1,800 officers

Bell Media – Jadrino Huot: You told us about an attack, and Chief Sloly talked about injuries to officers. Can you give us an idea of how many officers were injured and type of injuries suffered?

Steve Bell:

- In terms of serious injuries, we're fortunate that we haven't had any to this point
- Minor injuries during altercations, but didn't take any members out of commission or unable to provide policing services

CBC Ottawa – Kate Porter: When you speak of 100 trucks that have children in them and that CAS is involved, are you referring that they are somehow able remove children from the trucks? What are the next steps from police to move on those trucks if you're concerned about kids?

Steve Bell:

- We identified that concern for us, it came up early during the occupation, observed through members that they saw children/families in the core
- Concerns of everyone's wellbeing – carbon monoxide fumes, noise for neighbouring areas, access to sanitation, the cold – there are a multitude of concerns
- Raising it as something to be addressed and discussed with partners at CAS on how to move ahead
- We're not at the stage to do enforcement activities, we rely on CAS to provide guidance
- It's an important factor that complicates and challenges the operations, make sure people are aware of this

CityNews – Alex Goudge: How much difficulty does the fact that people are bringing water in fuel tanks, how much difficulty does that put on enforcement?

Steve Bell:

- What I can tell you is that it adds a layer of logistical complexity
- Creates challenges for us to stop and conduct searches and seize those gas cans and the fuel in them, and then charge someone as a result
- It also identifies a level of sophistication for that group to try to subvert police efforts
- We continue to have conversations with demonstrators, find remedies and resolutions to end this
- But as they harden their positions and engage in activities that blocks our efforts, it's concerning

CTV News – Ted Raymond: You mentioned that several vehicles parked downtown have been mobilized. How does that affect your ability to remove vehicles? Having issues to get towing companies to move vehicles, what are your next steps, when can we see more of that action taking place given the situation?

Steve Bell:

- The mobilizing vehicles in the areas of occupation is very concerning to us
- We've seen cars with tires taken off, large vehicles made their brakes bleed to render them immobile
- The sheer size is a challenge – the area covered but also size of the vehicles
- It's something we're considering and planning around
- At the end of this, we know we're going to have to do some clean up in that area, making operational plans to achieve that

Global News – Craig Lord: We've heard the ask for about 1,800 more personnel, looking at all options available, does the Ottawa Police have all the legal authority you need, or will you be seeking for more power before this is done?

Steve Bell:

- As we indicated early on, everything is on the table to consider in terms of options
- There are several legal avenues we continue to explore
- As part of our ask for resources, it's not just uniformed officers. We have in there lawyers, legal competencies we're seeking from various agencies (transport Canada, MTO, experts in insurance, experts in licensing and registrations for these types of large trucks)
- We brought an investigative strategy to look at all avenues and explore what else needs to be added to our toolbox to put those engaged accountable

Ottawa Citizen – Matt Lapierre: Can you give us updated timelines – any protest expectation for this weekend?

Steve Bell:

- We've never identified timelines, we want this occupation to end ASAP
- We want them to pick up, realize their message has been heard and go back home so we can have our city back

- We deserve this, our citizens are loud at calling for this to end
- We work everyday expeditiously and safely so that citizens can have their city back

Ottawa Sun – Jon Willing: How many in house heavy tow trucks does the City have, have they been rolled out because of any safety concerns?

Steve Bell:

- We don't give specific details on how we engage in enforcement activities
- We continue to work the City and with local tow trucks and how we can access those resources in the event that we need to move vehicles out of the downtown core
- Look at how other municipalities can support us in those efforts

Radio-Canada – Frederic Pepin: Some are walking around with jerry cans, with or without water. What's your strategy for fuel right now? Are we stopping everyone that we see? Or do more bigger operations (logistic areas)?

Steve Bell:

- We don't have one strategy, multi-pronged approach
- If you carry a jerry can into the footprint of the demonstration, you're subject to being stopped, searched and potentially charged
- While enforcing, we were looking at Coventry road and how we can remove the largest stockpiles
- Not one strategy, doing everything in our power to stop these people and get them to leave the City of Ottawa
- Will increase over the days

Kim Ayotte provides French answer

CTV National – Mackenzie Gray: Yesterday in press conference, talking about strict enforcement of the fuel – at the same time, our crews were downtown and saw wheel barrels carrying fuel going right by OPS. When asked why they did not intervene, the officers said there might be water in them, so they are free to move. How can we believe that there will be enforcement when we have proof that police stood by and did nothing?

Steve Bell:

- You saw us lay out the augmented resources to manage the occupation and demonstrators
- We identified the importance to cut off the flow of fuel in that area
- As you indicated, there are many different ways that this flow is coming into the core
- The 1,800 resources will help us close the perimeter of that and reduce the chance of fuel entering that area
- We have examples where one of our members were swarmed when trying to enforce
- We need the right number of officers to safely make those arrests and do the enforcement we need to do

CBC Kingston – Michelle Allan: Why haven't the police considered removing the protesters before removing the vehicles if local companies won't help, why can't we go to military who have the means?

Steve Bell:

- As indicated early on, we're looking at all options to safely end the occupation and remove them from our street
- Looking at all options to remove vehicles, look at having people leave willingly or with intervention from police officers
- All options remain on the table to peacefully end this

Globe and Mail – Kristy Kirkup: Downtown Ottawa residents have expressed concerns about alleged arsonist in a condo building. I know police force posted images of suspects; can you tell us what police believed happened there? I appreciate that there's investigation on the way. Is there reason to believe there's connection to protest and have the suspects been identified?

Steve Bell:

- Images captured, investigative team is looking into it
- Images were shared across the country to identify those individuals
- We understand the community's concern for something as dangerous as that
- No update as of now, but incidents like that are creating great amounts of concerns in neighbourhood
- No direct linkage, but community is at heightened risk
- Increase enforcement and numbers in that area
- Community meetings taking place today with members of that building, need to make sure people feel safe where they live. This is very important to police

Toronto Star – Tonda MacCharles: How many of those resources were you given so far (out of the 1800)? We heard the federal government say they are not ready to speak to the protestors. Given their position, what is the plan out of this is then? You seem powerless to change anything.

Steve Bell:

- Ask of 1,800 officers, sworn and civilian
- Continue to work with partners and planning to see where they will come from
- Got some from many partners – RCMP, OPP provided some resources
- Police services across Ontario have provided resources
- Cooperation continues and we thank our partners for help and assistance
- How we move forward? We continue to look at how we have fruitful dialogue with leaders of the occupation
- Strong police liaison team assets deployed to have regular conversations with those people
- Continue to look at all the options we have
- To date we've had over 1300 traffic violations identified
- You heard me lay out an investigation strategy on how we lay criminal charges, vehicle related charges and how to move ahead

- There's a need to end this, committed to do it peacefully and look at progressive negotiations but considering enforcement avenues as well

Canadian Press – Laura Osman: 1800 officers - you mentioned earlier you need more to harden that perimeter. Why isn't the City filing more injunctions – but if they did would you be able to enforce that with current officers? Is it a resources issue?

Steve Bell:

- 1800 officers are for a multitude of activities – hardened the area around the demonstration
- It takes upwards 400 officers a day to manage that footprint
- Need legal resources and investigative resources to look at our strategy and how to implement it
- Need public order assets to support us
- It is going to take a number of resources to support us to end this
- We are absolutely committed to ending this and that's why we made this large ask
- We need that presence to end this quickly

CityNews – Shelley Lee: The staging area used by protesters – dismantled the structure at Confederation Park, and there's a staging area at Coventry. Do you know how many staging areas there are and how do you stop them from creating more in other neighbourhoods?

Steve Bell:

- From the beginning of this, we strongly relied on gathering intelligence on the progress of the convoy across Canada
- Continue to work with partners (OPP, Surete du Quebec) to bring intelligence in and identify those fuel depots we are seeing
- Continue to take that information in and actively shut them down as we hear about them

CTV News – Ted Raymond: What's the mood among the rank – the city is questioning how you're doing your job. How is morale? Aside to that, would those resources be a boost to morale?

- Members are tired, very tired
- Go out every single day to try to take back a portion of our City
- They work hard in cold weather, difficult circumstances to manage this occupation
- Find it extremely challenging
- Morale is challenging, no other way to put it
- Continue to work day in and day out
- Some are working 7 days in a row
- They've done a great job, I'm extremely proud
- Everything they do is to support safety and security of our city and specifically the residents in the vicinity
- Ask for 1800 officers because our members need that help
- I'm glad you asked, it's been challenging for them and I'm proud of the work they do every single day

Closing Remarks – Kim Ayotte

- City is doing everything possible to support police
- We have staff working very hard, we're all very anxious to have this done and over with
- Please know we are working extremely hard, engaging all levels of government
- **Translates the same message in French*